THIRTY LETTERS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

Printed for T. CADELL, and T. EVANS, in the Strand;
and B. THORN and SON, in EXETER.

MDCCLXXXIII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

CONTENTS
OF THE
SECOND VOLUME.

LETTER		PAGE
XIX.	*Criticiſm on Quarles*	5
XX.	*On Warm Colouring*	27
XXI.	*A falſe Principle in Painting expoſed*	32
XXII.	*Paſſages in Shakeſpeare explained*	41
XXIII.	*Petition of* To *and* The	49
XXIV.	*On Self-Production*	56
XXV.	*Some Phraſes explained*	71
XXVI.	*Obſtructions in the Way of Fame*	77

XXVII.

LETTER PAGE
XXVII. *On Alliteration and Literation* 82
XXVIII. *On common Superſtitions* 88
XXIX. *Wrong Repreſentations of the Solar Syſtem* 92
XXX. *Criticiſm on Quarles concluded* 103

BRITISH 22 SE 88 MUSEUM

LETTERS.

LETTERS.

LETTER XIX.

THERE was never a poet more admired in his life or more deſpiſed after his death than Quarles. He was patronized by the beſt of his age while living, and when dead was firſt criticized, then contemned, and laſt of all totally forgotten, unleſs when ſome bard wanted a name of one ſyllable to fill up a liſt of miſerable rhymers. Pope was the laſt who made this uſe of him,

and at the ſame time, in a note, abuſed Benlowes for being his patron. I think it is Sir Philip Sidney who ſays that no piece was ever a favourite of the common people without merit. Now, though every thing I had heard of Quarles was much in his diſfavour, I could not help thinking but that he had ſomething good in him, from my never ſeeing one of his books of emblems that was not worn to rags; a ſign of its being read a good deal, unleſs it may be imagined that it was ſo uſed by children in turning over the prints. Be that as it may, I have peruſed as much of him as a very dirty tattered book would give me leave, and will riſque the declaring, that where he is good, I know but few

few poets better. He has a great deal of genuine fire, is frequently happy in ſimilies, admirable in epithets and compound words, very ſmooth in his verſification, ſo different from the poets of his own age; and poſſeſſed that great qualification of keeping you in perpetual alarm, ſo very different from the elegant writers of the preſent times.

I have run through his book of emblems to ſelect ſome paſſages for your obſervation—they are buried, it muſt be confeſſed, in a heap of rubbiſh, but are of too much value not to be worth ſome pains in recovering.—Where Quarles is bad, "he ſounds the very baſe-ſtring of humility"—but this may be ſaid

of Shakſpeare and Milton as well. —I mean not to put him in the ſame rank with theſe two poets; he has a much greater proportion of bad to good than is to be found in them, ſo much indeed as almoſt to prevent his good from appearing at all. My intention is to clear ſome of his ſhining paſſages of their incumbrances; which may occaſion their being noticed, and preſerved from oblivion.

What think you of the following ſimilies?

Look how the ſtricken hart that wounded flies
Oe'r hills and dales, and ſeeks the lower grounds
For running ſtreams, the whilſt his weeping eyes
Beg ſilent mercy from the following hounds;
At length, emboſt, he droops, drops down, and lies
Beneath the burthen of his bleeding wounds:
Ev'n ſo my gaſping ſoul, diſſolv'd in tears, &c.

EMB. II. BOOK IV.

Mark

Mark how the widow'd turtle, having loſt
The faithful partner of her loyal heart,
Stretches her feeble wings from coaſt to coaſt,
Hunts ev'ry path; thinks ev'ry ſhade doth part
Her abſent love and her; at length, unſped,
She re-betakes her to her lonely bed,
And there bewails her everlaſting widow-head.

EMB. 12. BOOK IV.

Look how the ſheep, whoſe rambling ſteps do ſtray
From the ſafe bleſſing of her ſhepherd's eyes,
Eft-ſoon becomes the unprotected prey
To the wing'd ſquadron of beleag'ring flies;
Where ſwelt'red with the ſcorching beams of day
She friſks from buſh to brake, and wildly flies away
From her own ſelf, ev'n of herſelf afraid;
She ſhrouds her troubled brows in ev'ry glade
And craves the mercy of the ſoft removing ſhade.

EMB. 14. BOOK IV.

The firſt, will probably remind you of Shakſpeare's deſcription of the wounded ſtag in *As you like it*; which it may do, and not ſuffer by the compariſon. The ſecond, is very original in the expreſſion—the

circumſtance of

——— thinks *every ſhade* doth part
Her abſent love and her———

is I believe new, and exquiſitely tender. There are others not much inferior to theſe.

The following verſes allude to the print prefixed, where a bubble is repreſented as heavier than the globe. It is neceſſary to obſerve, that the prints were deſigned firſt, and the poems are in a great meaſure explanatory of them.

Lord! what a world is this, which day and night
Men ſeek with ſo much toil, with ſo much trouble,
Which weigh'd in equal ſcales is found ſo light,
So poorly overbalanc'd with a bubble?
Good God! that frantic mortals ſhould deſtroy
Their higher hopes, and place their idle joy
Upon ſuch airy traſh, upon ſo light a toy!

* * * *

Thrice happy he, whoſe nobler thoughts deſpiſe
To make an object of ſo eaſy gains;

Thrice

Thrice happy he, who ſcorns ſo poor a prize
Should be the crown of his heroic pains:
Thrice happy he, that ne'er was born to try
Her frowns or ſmiles: or being born, did lie
In his ſad nurſe's arms an hour or two, and die.

EMB. 4. BOOK I.

Tho' the conſidering mortality on the gloomy ſide, is not productive of much happineſs, yet there are certain diſpoſitions which feel ſome gratification in it—Quarles was one of theſe. He ſeizes all opportunities of abuſing the world; and it muſt be confeſſed he has here done it in "choice and elegant terms."

Sometimes he is more outrageous in his abuſe.

Let wit, and all her ſtudied plots effect
The beſt they can;
Let ſmiling fortune proſper and perfect
What wit began;

Let earth adviſe with both, and ſo project
A happy man;
Let wit or fawning fortune vie their beſt;
He may be bleſt
With all that earth can give; but earth
Can give no reſt.

EMB. 6. BOOK I.

Again—

Falſe world, thou ly'ſt: thou canſt not lend
The leaſt delight:
Thy favours cannot gain a friend,
They are ſo ſlight:
Thy morning-pleaſures make an end
To pleaſe at night:
Poor are the wants that thou ſupply'ſt:
And yet thou vaunt'ſt, and yet thou vy'ſt
With heav'n; fond earth, thou boaſt'ſt,
Falſe world, thou ly'ſt.

EMB. 5. BOOK II.

The next quotation is an alluſion to the print, where the world is made a mirror.

Believe her not, her glaſs diffuſes
Falſe portraitures ———

Were

Were thy dimenſions but a ſtride,
Nay, wert thou ſtatur'd but a ſpan,
Such as the long-bill'd troops defy'd,
A very fragment of a man!

Had ſurfeits, or th' ungracious ſtar
Conſpir'd to make one common place
Of all deformities that are
Within the volume of thy face,
She'd lend the favour ſhou'd out-move
The Troy-bane Helen, or the Queen of Love.

EMB. 6. BOOK II.

This is finely wrought up—Quarles perfectly comprehended the effect of the muſical *creſcendo*, which is inſtanced particularly in the laſt paſſage.

There is ſomething very dreadful in the 4th line of this ſtanza.

See how the latter trumpet's dreadful blaſt
Affrights ſtout Mars his trembling ſon!

Soc

See how he ſtartles! how he ſtands aghaſt,
And ſcrambles from his melting throne!
Hark! how the direful hand of vengeance tears
The ſwelt'ring clouds, whilſt Heav'n appears
A circle fill'd with flame, and center'd with his fears.

EMB. 9. BOOK II.

Dr. Young has ſome lines on this ſubject which are by ſome much admired.—But tho' the ſubject be the ſame, it is differently circumſtanced.—Young's is a general deſcription of the laſt judgment, Quarles deſcribes its effect on a ſingle being who is ſuppoſed to have lived fearleſs of ſuch an event.

———————At the deſtin'd hour,
By the loud trumpet ſummon'd to the charge,
See all the formidable ſons of fire,
Eruptions, earthquakes, comets, lightnings, play
Their various engines; all at once diſgorge
Their blazing magazines; and take by ſtorm
This poor terreſtrial citadel of man.
Amazing period! when each mountain height
Out burns Veſuvius! rocks eternal pour

Their

Their melted maſs, as rivers once they pour'd;
Stars ruſh, and final *Ruin* fiercely drives
Her plough-ſhare o'er creation.———

Now to me, all this is a "peſtilent congregation of vapour."——The formidable ſons of fire ſpewing out blazing magazines—and *Ruin* like a plough-man (or rather plough-woman) driving *her* plough-ſhare —are mean, incoherent images. How much more ſublimely Quarles expreſſes the ſame, and indeed ſome additional ones, in the laſt three lines?

In the print belonging to the emblem from which the following is taken, is a figure ſtriking a globe with his knuckles.—The motto, *Tinnit, inane eſt.*

She's empty—hark! ſhe ſounds—there's nothing there
But noiſe to fill thy ear;

Thy

Thy vain enquiry can at length but find
A blaſt of murm'ring wind:
It is a caſk, that ſeems, as full as fair,
But merely tunn'd with air;
Fond youth, go build thy hopes on better grounds:
The ſoul that vainly founds
Her joys upon this world, but feeds on empty ſounds!

EMB. 10. BOOK II.

But that you may not think the good paſſages of this poet are only ſcattered unequally through his poems; take ſome entire ones—or nearly ſo.

What ſullen ſtar rul'd my untimely birth,
That would not lend my days one hour of mirth?
How oft' have theſe bare knees been bent to gain
The ſlender alms of one poor ſmile in vain?
How often, tir'd with the faſtidious light,
Have my faint lips implor'd the ſhades of night?
How often have my nightly torments pray'd
For ling'ring twilight, glutted with the ſhade?
Day worſe than night, night worſe than day appears,
In ſighs I ſpend my nights, my days in tears:
I moan unpity'd, groan without relief,
There is no end nor meaſure of my grief.

The

The ſmiling flow'r ſalutes the day; it grows
Untouch'd with care; it neither ſpins nor ſows:
O that my tedious life were like this flow'r,
Or freed from grief, or finiſh'd with an hour:
Why was I born? why was I born a man?
And why proportion'd by ſo large a ſpan?
Or why ſuſpended by the common lot,
And being born to die, why die I not?
Ah me! why is my ſorrow-waſted breath
Deny'd the eaſy privilege of death?
The branded ſlave, that tugs the weary oar,
Obtains the ſabbath of a welcome ſhore.
His ranſom'd ſtripes are heal'd; his native ſoil
Sweetens the mem'ry of his foreign toil:
But ah! my ſorrows are not half ſo bleſt;
My labour finds no point, my pains no reſt.

* * * * * *

Thou juſt obſerver of our flying hours,
That with thy adamantine fangs, devours
The brazen mon'ments of renowned kings,
Doth thy glaſs ſtand? or be thy moulting wings
Unapt to flie? if not, why doſt thou ſpare
A willing breaſt; a breaſt that ſtands ſo fair?
A dying breaſt, that hath but only breath
To beg the wound, and ſtrength to crave a death?
O that the pleaſed heav'ns would once diſſolve
Theſe fleſhly fetters, that ſo faſt involve

My hamper'd ſoul; then would my ſoul be bleſt
From all thoſe ills, and wrap her thoughts in reſt!
* * * * * *

EMB. 15. BOOK III.

At other times he complains of the ſhortneſs of life, and in ſtrains equally pathetic.

My glaſs is half unſpent; forbear t'arreſt
My thriftleſs day too ſoon: my poor requeſt
Is that my glaſs may run but out the reſt.

My time-devoured minutes will be done
Without thy help; ſee—ſee how ſwift they run!
Cut not my thread before my thread be ſpun.

The gain's not great I purchaſe by this ſtay;
What loſs ſuſtain'ſt thou by ſo ſmall delay,
To whom ten thouſand years are but a day?

My following eye can hardly make a ſhift
To count my winged hours; they fly ſo ſwift,
They ſcarce deſerve the bounteous name of gift.

The ſecret wheels of hurrying time do give
So ſhort a warning, and ſo faſt they drive,
That I am dead before I ſeem to live.

And

And what's a life? a weary pilgrimage,
Whoſe glory in one day doth fill the ſtage
With childhood, manhood, and decrepit age.

And what's a life? the flouriſhing array
Of the proud ſummer-meadow, which to-day
Wears her green pluſh, and is to-morrow hay.

Read on this dial, how the ſhades devour
My ſhort-liv'd winter's day; hour eats up hour;
Alas! the total's but from eight to four.

Behold theſe lilies, which thy hands have made
Fair copies of my life, and open laid
To view, how ſoon they droop, how ſoon they fade!

Shade not that dial, night will blind too ſoon;
My non-aged day already points to noon;
How ſimple is my ſuit! how ſmall my boon!

Nor do I beg this ſlender inch, to while
The time away, or falſely to beguile
My thoughts with joy; here's nothing worth a ſmile.

No, no, 'tis not to pleaſe my wanton ears
With frantic mirth; I beg but hours, not years:
And what thou giv'ſt me, I will give to tears!

* * * * * *

EMB. 13. BOOK III.

"Read

" Read on *this* dial"— " Behold *theſe* lilies"—does not this put you in mind of the ſame form of expreſſion in Oſſian? " His ſpear was like *that* blaſted fir."

Quarles was commenting on his print in which the dial and lilies were repreſented; Oſſian ſaw his images " in his mind's eye"—— but both the poets conſidered them as really exiſting — at leaſt, they make them exiſt to their readers.

" How the ſhades devour," &c. Shakſpeare has the ſame figure

——————the tide
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haſte

it is wonderfully expreſſive!

In what he calls his hieroglyphics, Quarles compares man to a taper, which furniſhes him with a number

ber of very ſtriking alluſions. It is at firſt unlighted, then a hand from heaven touches it with fire—the motto, *Neſcius unde.*

This flame-expecting taper hath at length
Received fire, and now begins to burn:
It hath no vigour yet, it hath no ſtrength;
Apt to be puft and quencht at every turn:
It was a gracious hand that thus endow'd
This ſnuff with flame: but mark, this hand doth ſhroud
Itſelf from mortal eyes, and folds it in a cloud.

Thus man begins to live. An unknown flame
Quickens his finiſhed organs, now poſſeſt
With motion; and which motion doth proclaim
An active ſoul, though in a feeble breaſt:
But how, and when infus'd, aſk not my pen;
Here flies a cloud before the eyes of men,
I cannot tell thee how, nor canſt thou tell me when.

Was it a parcel of celeſtial fire,
Infus'd by heav'n into this fleſhly mould?
Or was it, think you, made a ſoul entire?
Then, was it new created, or of old?

Or is't a propagated ſpark, rak'd out
From nature's embers? while we go about
By reaſon to reſolve, the more we raiſe a doubt.

If it be part of that celeſtial flame,
It muſt be ev'n as pure, as free from ſpot,
As that eternal fountain whence it came;
If pure and ſpotleſs, then whence came the blot?
Itſelf being pure, could not itſelf defile;
Nor hath unactive matter pow'r to ſoil
Her pure and active form, as jars corrupt their oil.

Or if it were created, tell me when?
If in the firſt ſix days, where kept 'till now?
Or if thy ſoul were new-created, then
Heav'n did not all at firſt, he had to do:
Six days expired, all creation ceaſt;
All kinds, ev'n from the greateſt to the leaſt,
Were finiſh'd and compleat before the day of reſt.

But why ſhould man, the Lord of creatures, want
That privilege which plants and beaſts obtain?
Beaſts bring forth beaſts, and plant a perfect plant;
And ev'ry like brings forth her like again;
Shall fowls and fiſhes, beaſts and plants convey
Life to their iſſue, and man leſs than they?
Shall theſe get living ſouls, and man dead lumps of clay?

Muſt

Muſt human ſouls be generated then?——
My water ebbs; behold a rock is nigh:
If nature's work produce the ſouls of men,
Man's ſoul is mortal—all that's born muſt die.
What ſhall we then conclude! what ſunſhine will
Diſperſe this gloomy cloud? till then, be ſtill
My vainly ſtriving thoughts; lie down my puzzled quill.

HIEROGLYPH. 2.

The cloſeneſs of the reaſoning, and the freedom of the verſes cannot be enough admired. I believe it would be difficult if not impoſſible to reaſon ſo ſhortly and yet ſo clearly in proſe. Pope ſays the thoughts in his Eſſay on Man are in leſs compaſs for their being in verſe. The poetical language admits of eliſions and other varieties we cannot have in proſe. This poem is followed by another, before which is a deſign of the winds blowing the flame of the taper, with this

motto, "*The wind paſſeth over it, and it is gone!*"

No ſooner is this lighted Taper ſet
Upon the tranſitory ſtage
Of eye-bedark'ning night,
But it is ſtraight ſubjected to the threat
Of envious winds, whoſe waſteful rage
Diſturbs her peaceful light,
And makes her ſubſtance waſte, and makes her flame leſs bright.

No ſooner are we born, no ſooner come
To take poſſeſſion of this vaſt,
This ſoul-afflicting earth,
But danger meets us at the very womb;
And ſorrow with her full-mouth'd blaſt
Salutes our painful birth
To put out all our joys, and puff out all our mirth.

Nor infant innocence, nor childiſh tears,
Nor youthful wit, nor manly pow'r,
Nor politic old age,
Nor virgins pleading, nor the widows pray'rs,
Nor lowly cell, nor lofty tow'r,
Nor prince, nor peer, nor page,
Can 'ſcape this common blaſt, nor curb her ſtormy rage.

* * * * * *

Toſt

Toſt to and fro, our frighted thoughts are driv'n
With ev'ry puff, with ev'ry tide
Of life-conſuming care;
Our peaceful flame, that would point up to heav'n
Is ſtill diſturb'd and turn'd aſide;
And ev'ry blaſt of air
Commits ſuch waſte in man, as man cannot repair.

* * * * * *

What may this ſorrow-ſhaken life preſent
To the falſe reliſh of our taſte
That's worth the name of ſweet?
Her minute's pleaſure's choak'd with diſcontent,
Her glory ſoil'd with ev'ry blaſt—
How many dangers meet
Poor man betwixt the biggin and the winding ſheet!

HIEROGLYPH. 3.

Tho' I have purpoſely omitted pointing out many of the particular beauties of theſe poems, I would wiſh you to obſerve, in this laſt, the fine effect of compound words in which this author is ſo happy: alſo the noble ſwell in the third

ſtanza—the application of his allegory to its meaning, in the fourth, where the expreſſion ſo admirably ſuits with both "our peaceful flame, &c."——if theſe are not genuine ſtrokes of genius, I muſt, as a great critic ſays on a like occaſion, acknowledge my ignorance of ſuch ſubjects. I wiſh we had ſome word in our language to expreſs the ſame idea in poetry as *creſcendo* does in muſic; ſwell is applied to ſo many other purpoſes, that it has not the effect of an appropriated term.

But for the preſent I muſt quit the ſubject—in a little time expect the remainder of my obſervations on this poet.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

EVERY one ſeems to be ſatisfied that warm colouring is eſſential to a good picture: but what *is* warm colouring is not determined. Some have joined the idea of warmth to yellow, others to red, others to the compound of both, the orange—they alſo differ in the degrees of each. A warm picture to ſome, is cold to others; and vice verſa. Lambert's idea of warmth, was to make his pictures appear as if they were behind a yellow glaſs. Vanbloom's have a red glaſs before

them. Both's an orange colour. Each has its admirers, who condemn the reſt.

Who ſhall decide when Doctors diſagree?

Nature. All theſe hues are right as *particulars*, but wrong as *univerſals*.

Let us examine the different appearances of light from the dawn to noon. The firſt break of day is a cold light in the Eaſt—this, by degrees, is tinged with purple, which grows redder and redder until the purple is loſt in orange—the orange in yellow, and before the ſun is two degrees high, the yellow is changed to white. Invert the order of theſe, and it is the coming on of the evening. All theſe hues then

then exiſt in nature, and one is juſt as right as the other.

It is neceſſary to diſtinguiſh between the painter's *warmth*, and the ſenſation. A picture, that has moſt warmth of colouring, repreſents that time of the day when we feel leaſt. A true repreſentation of noon muſt have no tinge of yellow or red in the ſky; and yet from its being noon, one might be led to imagine it muſt be *warm*. It is the critic, and not the artiſt, which confounds the meaning of theſe terms. In like manner, ſummer and winter, in reſpect to light, are juſt the ſame: the ſun riſes and ſets as gorgeouſly in December, if the weather be clear, as in June. I remember ſeeing two pictures of

Cuyp,

Cuyp, companions—one, a cattle piece in ſummer; the other, winter with figures ſkaiting. The ſky in both was equally *warm*, for which the painter was much cenſured by an auction-connoiſſeur, who declared that it was impoſſible the ſky could be *warm* in winter.

I believe it is a common miſtake to apply the red and purple tints to the morning, and the orange and yellow to the evening. We hear pictures of Claude called mornings and evenings, which may be either. It is really odd enough, that there ſhould not be a ſingle circumſtance to diſtinguiſh the morning from the evening, unleſs it be in a view of a particular place — in this caſe, the reverſing of the light ſhews the difference.

difference. In a picture, there is no diſtinction between going to work, or milking, or returning from it—men ride, drive cattle, are fiſhing, &c. as well early as late.

Theſe conſiderations ſhould ſoften the peremptory ſtyle of ſome judges, and extend their taſte, which at preſent ſeems much confined. We have ſeen that there are more natural hues than one or two. I will allow them to ſay, that a picture is too warm, too cold, too red, too yellow to pleaſe them, but let them not deny that theſe hues are all in nature, and that well-managed they are all pictoreſque.

LETTER XXI.

AT the revival of the arts, ſome evil genius, who was determined to retard the progreſs of painting, dictated this rule. "A picture ſhould always have its horizon the height of the eye *that looks at it*—in nature, the eye being always the height of the horizon; therefore a picture will be moſt like nature that has its horizon the height of the *natural eye.*" One of the falſeſt rules that ever was founded on a falſe principle! and this is the more lamentable, as it has ſpoiled,

in

in point of perſpective, three parts of the hiſtorical pictures that have ever been painted.

As it is very difficult to deſtroy a rooted error, and as this is a moſt pernicious one, it is neceſſary to be full and particular.

When I ſay *eye* and *horizon*—the natural eye and horizon are meant. When the terms *artificial eye* and *artificial horizon* are uſed, the eye and the horizon repreſented in painting are to be underſtood. We muſt be clear in this diſtinction, for it is the confounding of the ideas expreſſed by theſe terms which has occaſioned the miſchief.

The eye, and the horizon, are always of the ſame height—therefore

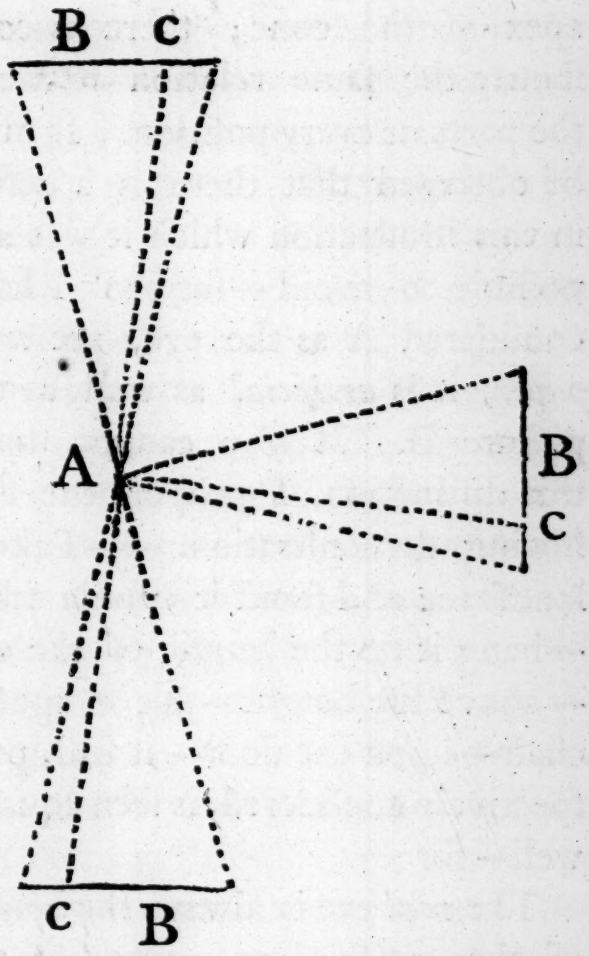
The

The artificial eye and the artificial horizon muſt always be ſo—but

There is no connection between the *real* eye, and the *artificial* horizon.

In every picture the artificial eye, or point of ſight, is ſuppoſed to be at a certain height from the baſeline; as high as a human figure would be, repreſented as ſtanding there. To this point every thing in the picture tends, as every thing in a real view tends to the natural eye. The picture then, as far as this circumſtance is concerned, is perfect, if the *artificial* eye and the *artificial* horizon go together; for theſe always bear the ſame relation to each other, let the picture be placed any where.

Let



Let A be the eye, B the picture (in ſection) and C the horizon of the picture.—The eye is always the apex

apex of the cone; there is conſtantly the ſame relation between the parts in every poſition. It muſt be obſerved that there is a defect in this illuſtration which it was impoſſible to avoid—for tho' I have conſidered A as the eye, yet *upon paper*, it is *artificial* as well as the picture B. If you cannot make this diſtinction, I propoſe the following demonſtration.——Take a landſcape and ſtand it upon a table—hang it up the height of the eye—above the height—put it upon a chair—upon the floor—it ſtill, perſpectively conſidered, is ſeen equally well—for

The *real* eye is always the height of the *artificial* eye, whether the picture be fixed in the cieling or laid upon the floor.

Indeed

Indeed if this was not ſo, how would it be poſſible to hang one picture over another? and yet this is done, and with the greateſt propriety.

I have often lamented the ſhifts to which painters are reduced, who have followed this rule in oppoſition to their ſenſes. Lareſſe was ſo thoroughly poſſeſſed with it, that his idea of fitting up a room with pictures, was to have thoſe which were below the eye to contain nothing but ground, and thoſe which were above, the ſky and clouds. But though he was convinced of the rectitude of his principle, he was ſtruck with the oddity of the practice—he therefore recommended that there ſhould be but one

picture from the floor to the cieling, in which there might be a perfect coincidence of the natural and artificial horizon.

A portrait-painter ſets the perſon he is to draw generally the height of his eye.——Suppoſe it to be a whole-length with a landſcape in the back-ground: the artiſt conſiders his picture is to hang above the eye, and for that reaſon makes his horizon low, about the height of the knees. The conſequence is, that there are two points of ſight, which ſuppoſes an impoſſibility; for the eye cannot be in two places at the ſame time. If the eye be ſuppoſed on a level with the head of the figure, as it was on drawing the face, then the back-ground is

too

too low; if equal to the horizon of the back-ground, then the figure is too high, unleſs we ſuppoſe it on an eminence, or ourſelves in a pit; in that caſe, inſtead of ſeeing the face in front, we muſt have looked under the chin—but as we do not, the figure always appears to be falling forward.

Raffaele's horizon is moſt commonly the height of his figures, ſo that they ſtand properly, and ſeem to be, whether in a print or a picture, the ſize of human creatures; —on the contrary, when the horizon is low, the figures always appear gigantic. When I was a boy, I had formed ſo very exalted an idea of the ſize of running horſes, from ſeeing them drawn with the

diſtant hills appearing under their bodies, that the firſt time I was at a courſe, it appeared but as a rat-race.

Every whole length picture will furniſh you with an inſtance of this falſe principle, which would appear more diſagreeable, if cuſtom had not in ſome meaſure reconciled us to it. I am aware that the practice of ſo many great men is a ſtrong objection to my argument; but as I conceive, with due ſubmiſſion to ſuch authority, that there is *demonſtration* on my ſide, I cannot eaſily retract what I have advanced.

LETTER XXII.

THE commentators of Shakſpeare think themſelves obliged to find ſome meaning in his nonſenſe; and to come at it, twiſt and turn his words without mercy: never conſidering, that in his ſcenes, as in common life, ſome part muſt be neceſſarily unimportant.

Many a paſſage has been criticiſed into conſequence. The meaning, to uſe Shakſpeare's words on a like occaſion, "is like a grain of wheat hid in a buſhel of chaff; you ſhall ſeek all day e'er you find it, and

when you have it, it is not worth the ſearch."

An expreſſion of *Shallow*'s in the ſecond part of Henry the fourth has been the ſubject of much criticiſm and hypercriticiſm. "We will eat a laſt year's pippin with a diſh of carraways;" and it is certain that there was ſuch a diſh, but if Shakſpeare had meant it, he would have ſaid, "A diſh of laſt year's pippins with carraways"—"*with* a diſh, &c." clearly means ſomething diſtinct from the pippins. Roaſted pippins ſtuck full of carraways, ſays one—carraway confect, or comfit well known to children, ſays another—as if every one did not know what carraway comfits were, ſays a third, laughing at the ſecond. Dine with any

any of the *natural* inhabitants of Bath about Chriſtmas, and they probably will give you after dinner a diſh of pippins and carraways—which laſt is the name of an apple as well known in that country as nonpareil is in London, and as generally aſſociated with golden pippins.

"Then am I a ſous'd gurnet," ſays Falſtaff. This fiſh has puzzled the commentators as much as the apple did before.—What can it be?—I never heard of ſuch a fiſh.—There is no ſuch fiſh. A magazine critic, aſſured of its non-exiſtence, propoſed reading *grunt*, gurnet, quaſi grunet, quaſi grunt——well, and what do we get by that? Why, becauſe hogs grunt, and pork is

the fleſh of hogs, ſous'd gurnet means pickled pork! Very lately a commentator, who once denied its exiſtence, has diſcovered in conſequence of his great learning, that there is *really* ſuch a fiſh——he is *really* in the right—if he will go to the South coaſt of Devonſhire, he may ſee plenty of them—but not *ſous'd*.

And now I mention Falſtaff, let me explain his copper ring. He complains of being robbed when he was aſleep, and "loſing a ſeal-ring of his *grandfather's* worth forty marks." "O Jeſu," ſays the hoſteſs, "I have heard the prince tell him I know not how oft, that the ring was *copper*." Is the appearance of copper ſo much like gold, that one may

may be miſtaken for the other? Formerly, (about the time of Falſtaff's grandfather) gold was a ſcarce commodity in England, ſo ſcarce that they frequently made rings of copper and plated them thinly with gold; I have ſeen two or three of them. As the look of both was alike, Falſtaff might inſiſt upon its being gold; on the contrary, the prince, from the quality of the wearer and lightneſs of the ring, might with equal fairneſs maintain that it was only plated.

Though it is not my intention to make one of the number of Shakſpeare's commentators, I will take this opportunity of reſtoring a paſſage in King Lear. In the agony

agony of his paſſion with his daughter, he ſays (in the modern editions)

" Th' *untented* woundings of a Father's curſe
Pierce every ſenſe about thee."

In the old editions it is printed exceeding plainly, " Th' *untender* woundings, &c." that is, not tender, or cruel. It would be waſte of time to ſhew its propriety, and that there is no ſuch word as *untented*. Who firſt threw out the true reading and ſubſtituted the falſe, I know not. Is it worth while to ſay, that the word is often uſed by Shakſpeare, and once at leaſt beſides in the ſame play, " ſo young and ſo untender?"

One

One more and I will releaſe you. —Shylock ſays,

Some men there are, love not a gaping pig;
Some that are mad, if they behold a cat;
And others, when the bag-pipe ſings in the noſe,
Cannot contain, &c. ——— for *affection*.

that is, becauſe they are ſo *affected*. Theſe poor lines have been new-worded, new ſtopped, and all to find the meaning of as plain a paſſage as can be written. "Some men cannot abide this thing, others have an averſion to another, which ſometimes produces ſtrange effects on their bodies, becauſe their imagination is ſo ſtrongly *affected*. Maſterleſs paſſion, ſuffering, or feeling, compels them to follow the impulſe." The not underſtanding

affection

affection and *paſſion* in Shakſpeare's quaint ſenſe has occaſioned the difficulty.

There are many other corrupted and miſunderſtood paſſages that require as little attention, to ſet them right, as what has been exerted on this occaſion, by

Yours ſincerely, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

SCARCE a year paſſes but our language has ſome new trick played with it.—But let the ſufferers ſpeak for themſelves.

To the People of GREAT-BRITAIN.

The Petition of *To* and *The*,

Humbly ſheweth,

THAT your Petitioners have, time out of mind, poſſeſſed certain places allowed to be their undoubted right, and that they lately have been, *vi et armis*, thruſt from their ancient

ancient poſſeſſions. Their misfortune being in common, they preſent their common petition; hoping that the laudable zeal for the reformation of abuſes will extend even to them, and that they ſhall be reſtored to their priſtine uſe and conſequence.

Though your petitioners labour under a common misfortune, yet it is neceſſary that they ſeparately ſtate their caſe.—And firſt *To* for himſelf ſays,

That he has for years paſt had a place in the direction of all letters — that he was firſt removed from thence, as he apprehends, by ſome member of parliament, who was too much buſied in his country's good to attend to propriety. As

it

it is the wicked cuſtom of the world to preſs down a falling man, the ſaid *To* is in a manner totally diſplaced from his ancient poſſeſſion: all people, except the very few who prefer grammar to faſhion, agreeing to his removal. Were his place filled by a worthy ſucceſſor he ſhould keep his complaints ſecret, remembering that he himſelf ſucceeded *For*—but to be ſucceeded by nothing, is reviving the old fanatic principle of the laſt century, which all who are lovers of the conſtitution muſt ſhudder at! Conſider good people, you who ſo well know the value of property, what quantities of letters are at this inſtant in the poſt-office that are neither *To* nor *For* any perſon? In many inſtances

ſtances you condeſcend to be inſtructed by your neighbours—is the *A* Monſieur yet left out in the direction of French letters? If you were to addreſs in Latin, would you not uſe the dative caſe—and pray what is the ſign of the dative but your petitioner

To?

Secondly, *The* for himſelf ſays,

That he has had, from the firſt exiſtence of our language, precedence of army, navy, commons, lords, and even government itſelf; —that he is moſt baſely removed from this his juſt ſtation—for he appeals to all impartial judges, if ſuch are to be found, what a fooliſh figure does army, navy, commons, lords,

lords, and government cut without he takes the lead. If this were alone the damage it is ſurely of great concern, but alas! the evil is ſpreading! ſcarce a day paſſes but he loſes ſome ancient poſſeſſion of truſt and conſequence! It is, indeed, inſinuated, that your petitioner formerly uſurped a ſtation he had by no means a right to, and that his preſent loſs is a juſt retaliation. What buſineſs had *The*, ſays theſe meddlers, before *Fauſtina* and *Cuzzoni*, and ſo on through all the *inas* and *onis* to the preſent time? Alas! my good countrymen, conſider, theſe were but poſſeſſions of a day! *The* Fauſtina and her ſucceſſors were but the graſshoppers of a ſeaſon—from this encroachment he

was ſoon diſpoſſeſſed; but navy, army, miniſtry, are of perpetual duration. Perhaps you will reply that your petitioner is but an article—true—but think of the conſequence—if you deſtroy your particles and articles, and reduce your language by degrees to noun ſubſtantives, who knows but the next innovation will be the ſubſtituting *things* inſtead of *words*—you have heard of a country ſo incumbered. ——Conſider the expence of carriage.—Think, O ye wits, of having your coaches attended with waggon loads of converſation. Nip the evil in its bud, ſhew your regard for poſterity, and conſider the petition of

The,

In

In a general wreck it is worth while to ſave ſomething.——Your Petitioners are contented to be thruſt out of parliament—it is confeſſed that the members of that honourable houſe ſhould not attend to trifles.—But conſider, good people, you are not *all* members of parliament, *you* may reſtore us to our ancient rights, our juſt privileges, and legal poſſeſſions—which we truſt you will do, and your poor Petitioners

Shall ever pray, &c.

LETTER XXIV.

I Cannot agree with you in the cauſe of that uncommon production you mention; my thoughts on this ſubject, and on ſome others connected with it, will appear by the following reflections.

Until the laſt hundred years or thereabout, it was ſuppoſed that in many inſtances life was produced by putrefaction, fermentation, &c. Leuwenhoek and other naturaliſts, clearly demonſtrated that ſome animals which were ſuppoſed to owe their exiſtence to the above cauſes, or

or in other words, to ſpontaneous generation, really had a regular production. This diſcovery eſtabliſhed the general principle of *omnia ab ovo*—but it muſt be received with reſerve and exception.

After giving every theory of the earth a patient reading, it ſeems to me probable that the whole world was originally covered with water to the depth of about three miles, which is about as much below the ſurface, as the higheſt mountains riſe above it. This depth, though far below all ſoundings, bears no more proportion to the earth's diameter, than that of the paper it is covered with does to a common globe. The idea of the ſea approaching the center, and of courſe,

poſſeſſing a ſuperior ſhare in quantity as well as ſurface of the earth, has occaſioned many difficulties in accounting for the balance between the different ſides of the globe; which vaniſh, if the ſea is not ſuppoſed of a greater depth than neceſſity requires, or reaſon and probability warrant.

I conſider all continents as a congeries of iſlands heaved up from the bottom of the ſea at different times by vulcanos and earthquakes. Modern philoſophers have diſcovered ancient vulcanos where they were never ſuſpected to have exiſted, and the whole earth is full of evidence that it was once beneath the ocean. Marble, freeſtone, and many other ſubſtances abound in ſea-

ſhells

ſhells and marine productions. It is frequently ſaid that the ſea has left many places which were once covered by it. Is it not rather to be ſuppoſed that thoſe places have been elevated above the ſea, than that the ſea has ſunk below them? There ſeems to be no cauſe in nature equal to the altering the quantity of water in the ocean, but we know that there are many cauſes equal to the elevating the land above it. If the ſea had retired from the land, the retiring muſt have been equal in all places; this we are ſure is not the caſe, therefore it is the land in that particular place that muſt be riſen.

In the manner I ſuppoſe all land to have been firſt brought to light,

many iſlands have been produced in our own time. What was under the water is forced above it. The marine ſubſtances on the ſurface by degrees decay; moſs appears, graſs ſucceeds, then the ſmaller kind of plants, buſhes and trees. Animal life begins and goes on upon the ſame ſcale from the minuter, to beings of more conſequence. This ſyſtem is at leaſt as general as the other, but like that muſt be received with many reſtrictions; for it is certain that by far the greater part of vegetables and animals would never be found ſelf-produced in any one place, tho' many might live, and indeed flouriſh, if brought there.

Let

Let us proceed from reaſoning to facts. Some voyager diſcovers an iſland evidently formed by a vulcano, and very remote from other countries; it is a perfect wood to the water's edge, has ſome plants which exiſt no where but in that ſpot, together with others common to places in the ſame latitude. It is full of inſects, reptiles, birds, and ſometimes quadrupeds. Now, if *every one* of theſe organized bodies was not brought there, ſomething muſt be ſelf-produced.

In ſome iſlands of the Eaſt-Indies are ſerpents of an enormous ſize; who could carry them there? In all ſtreams there are fiſh—how could they get there? Not from the ſea, for fiſh which inhabit the ſource of rivers

rivers are as ſoon killed by ſalt water as in air, beſides there are many rivers which do not run into the ocean. Perhaps this circumſtance was never ſufficiently conſidered. Every ſet of rivers is perfectly diſtinct from any other ſet. The greater number have ſome fiſh which exiſt no where but in the particular ſtream they are bred. Find any other cauſe for their firſt production than what muſt be taken from the old philoſophy.

Let us attend to what we have always near us. Fill a veſſel with water from the pump: it is pure, and contains neither animal, nor vegetable. After ſtanding ſome days, a green ſubſtance begins to be formed in it, and which is inhabited by myriads of little beings: this

this ſeems the firſt ſtep towards plants and animals. We are told indeed that the animalcules are from eggs laid by flies, and the green ſlime is a plant which has its proper ſeed. That the water may accidentally receive both eggs and ſeeds is highly probable; but theſe (by reaſoning from other inſtances) ſeem the firſt efforts towards vegetable and animal life. Beſides, it yet remains to be proved, that the air ſo abounds with flying ſeeds and inſects. If the air ſwarmed, as is ſuppoſed, viſion would be obſtructed (as by a fog which conſiſts of particles inconceivably ſmall), and perhaps life in the nobler animals deſtroyed. The ſlime to be produced from ſeed then muſt have

come

come from ſome of the ſame ſort in the neighbourhood; beſides, if its being produced in the water depended upon accident, which it does by this ſuppoſition, it muſt ſometimes fail. Again, if the animals and vegetables, in the above inſtance, were from eggs floating in the air, why are the ſmalleſt always produced firſt? muſt it not ſometimes happen that ova of a larger ſort precede the ſmaller? which is never the caſe: not to mention the total impoſſibility of ſome ova, particularly of animals, being ſo conveyed.

It is well known that by pepper-water, and a variety of other mixtures, peculiar animalcules are produced. Can we ſuppoſe that the fly

fly, which lays the egg from which this creature exiſts, continues floating in the air until ſome philoſopher makes a mixture proper for its depoſit? is it done often enough to preſerve the ſpecies? What muſt the fly have done before pepper was brought from India? You may tell me that the egg was depoſited there —well then, if the eggs are not hurt by the pepper being dried in an oven, happen to be brought to Europe, and fall in the way of a naturaliſt, the ſpecies is preſerved. Much is not got by this. There is great reaſon for believing that the animalcule was really produced by the infuſion, and did not exiſt before.

How are the worms in human bodies to be accounted for? There

are

are ſome, it is true, which bear a reſemblance to earth-worms, and are ſuppoſed to be eggs we take in with roots, vegetables, &c. Not to inſiſt upon the impoſſibility of a creature intended to live in the cold earth exiſting ~~on~~ in the hot ſtomach, it is well known that there are worms in the inteſtines which have no reſemblance to any other thing in the creation—the jointed worm, for inſtance, which is found of many yards in length: indeed, if ſome accounts are to be credited, of ſome ſcores of yards. Where does this animal exiſt except in the ſtomach where it is found? Sheep, dogs, horſes, &c. breed worms peculiar to themſelves. I have ſeen frequently between the ſound and back-

back-bone of a whiting, long worms that were evidently bred there. As I have no ſyſtem to ſupport, I ſhall have no objection if you can account for theſe facts according to the preſent philoſophy —but to me it ſeems abſolutely impoſſible.

I may ſtrengthen every thing I have advanced on ſelf-production with additional arguments, and thoſe from inſtances on the largeſt ſcale. The old and new continents are two immenſe iſlands. You will get little by ſuppoſing them once joined at Kamchatka. What ſhould ever induce thoſe animals which are never ſeen out of a hot climate, to travel ſo far North as the Strait between the continents? They do not approach

approach it now, why ſhould they then? Beſides, has not each continent ſome creatures peculiar to itſelf? Did thoſe in America come from countries where no ſuch animals exiſt? If they did not, and are found in America only, what is the fair concluſion?

When an inhabitant of the old continent aſks how America was peopled, why does the queſtion ſtop there? How was it ſupplied with vegetables and animals? particularly river-fiſh; and whence came thoſe creatures that exiſt no where elſe? Pray, what is to hinder an American from reverſing the queſtion? When did our people, he may ſay, firſt migrate and give inhabitants to the Eaſtern world?

What

What anſwer can be given to theſe queſtions conſiſtent with the preſent ſyſtem of philoſophy?

There is ſomething in the ſound of ſelf-production which ſeems like a contradiction. I mean nothing more by it, than that a vegetable or animal does in many inſtances firſt exiſt by a different principle than that upon which the ſpecies is afterwards continued. As the term does not exactly expreſs this, it may eaſily be perverted from the ſenſe in which I wiſh to be underſtood. Perhaps we ſhall find that ſelf-production ſhocks the imagination more or leſs according to the *ſize* of the thing produced. Who would not ſooner believe that cheeſe breeds mites, than that deſerts produce elephants?

And yet, according to our preſent philoſophy, one is as poſſible as the other.

If the conſequences I have drawn from theſe facts appear to you wrong, or the facts themſelves ill-ſupported—convince me of my error, and the whole ſhall be retracted as freely as it is advanced by

Yours moſt faithfully, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

THO' I hate to ſet out upon the principle of word-hunting, yet it always gives me pleaſure when by accident I can trace the meaning of a word or phraſe to its ſource, and purſue it through its various changes to its preſent ſtate. The pleaſure is ſtill greater to mark the gradual refinement of language from obſcurity and barbariſm, until it arrives at preciſion and elegance. Our tongue, as every one knows, is a compound of many.——The pains which William the Conqueror

took to graft his Norman French upon it, ſucceeded in many inſtances, and there are others where we may trace the dying away of the French by degrees, and the Engliſh reſuming its old place. Chaucer in his character of the Monk, ſays

He was a lord full fat and in *good point*.

This is the remains of the French *embonpoint*, or as it was written then *en bon point*.——The phraſe was wearing out in Chaucer's time, the *en bon* being tranſlated, and *point* preſerved. Now, the whole is tranſlated, and we ſay *in good caſe*, or *plight*.——You may find many other inſtances of this in the old poets.

" The

"The days are now a cock-ſtride longer," ſay the country-folks at Twelfth-day—and many have been the conjectures upon the derivation of this phraſe (ſee the Gentleman's Magazine). It is not cock-ſtride, but cock's-tread. In the country, *tread* is pronounced *trede*, (not *tred*) —and in moſt of the weſtern counties, Devonſhire excepted, *ſtride* has more of the *e* than *i* in its ſound.—But the impoſſibility of expreſſing by any known ſigns the different provincial modifications of the ſound of the vowels, has occaſioned ſome ſtrange miſtakes when people of one county endeavour to write down an expreſſion uſed in another. Our old poets, who generally writ in the

dialect of the province where they reſided, and ſpelt as well as they could with their own country vowels, have given birth to much laughable criticiſm.

Help-mate is an odd corruption. In the Book of Geneſis it is ſaid, "it is not good for man to be alone, I will make an help meet for him" —that is an help, *proper* for him— *meet* is an adjective. But theſe two words, like the firſt man and his help, ſoon became one, and of late have been corrected into *help-mate*.

As I was reading John Struys's voyages the other day, I thought I diſcovered the original of the word, and perhaps of the liquor, punch; which, if I am right, has nothing to

to do with that diverting perſonage in puppet-ſhews of the ſame name, from whom it is uſually derived. Struys was at Gomroon in Perſia, where he ſays, he drank—— "A liquor much in uſe there, called *pale punſhen*, being compounded of arak, ſugar, and raiſins, which is ſo bewitching that they cannot refrain from drinking it." I really believe he *forgot* to mention the water—for how in ſuch a climate as the ſouthern part of Perſia it was poſſible to drink undiluted arak, I have no conception. The raiſins have given place, and very properly, to lemons. But I had better leave this to its own merits.—I am afraid it will not bear too minute an examination — remember it is only

humbly offered together with the other conjectures of

Yours, &c.

As Struys's Voyages is a ſcarce book, I might with great eaſe have practiſed the common trick of authors, and introduced *water* into the quotation without fear of diſcovery. It being ſuppoſed that few will give themſelves the trouble to turn to the original book to examine extracts, authors have been made to give evidence to facts, "of which they nothing know," and to ſupport ſyſtems which never had exiſtence, but in the imagination of the writer who preſſes them into his ſervice.

LETTER

LETTER XXVI.

THE rubs and difficulties which the public throw in the way of a genius at his firſt appearance, are frequently too great to be ſurmounted.

We are apt to form our opinion of a man's abilities, by his reſemblance to ſome other man of reputation in the art or ſcience he profeſſes. A painter, muſician, or author perfectly new we are afraid to commend—like hounds, we wait for the opening of one whoſe cry we may venture to follow.—But it ſhould

ſhould be remembered that a ſure mark of a genius is originality. As he is original, and therefore new, perhaps it may be neceſſary to conquer ſome prepoſſeſſions before we can judge of his merit; and as he is generally incapable, from that modeſty which ſo frequently attends ability, of inſiſting on his own excellencies, the world ſhould take that taſk from him.—But does it ſo? Or from the fear of commending too haſtily, leave a Being to languiſh in obſcurity, which ſhould be protected and encouraged. The greateſt part of thoſe who ſeem to have been born to make mankind happy, were themſelves miſerable. A melancholy catalogue might be made of

theſe.

theſe. If we know any thing of Homer, it is, that he ran about ballad-ſinging. Poor, unhappy, half-ſtarved Cervantes, Camöens, Butler, Fielding! Does it not grieve you to be told that the author of Tom Jones lies in the factory's burying-ground at Liſbon, undiſtinguiſhed, unregarded—not a ſtone to mark the place! And would it not raiſe our indignation to behold ſtately monuments erected for thoſe whoſe names were never heard of, until they appeared in their epitaph? ——were they not conſidered rather as monuments of the ſculptor's art, than as preſerving the memory of the perſons whoſe duſt they ſo pompouſly cover.

The

The inſtances of thoſe original geniuſes who in their life-time have enjoyed the public applauſe and lived by it, are very few—indeed I cannot recollect any—Garrick excepted. I do not conſider Virgil or Pope in this light—they are not original. It is true that Shakſpeare lived well enough, but the money he got was by acting, not writing. Milton was in tolerable circumſtances, but if he had had nothing more to depend on than the profit ariſing from the ſale of the fineſt poem in the world, he muſt have been ſtarved.

It is common when we ſpeak of a genius, to ſay, he will not be valued until he is dead—not that his death is eſſential to his reputation; but

but there is a neceſſity of his being known and underſtood, before he can be eſteemed; and it generally happens that life is of too ſhort duration for that purpoſe—

" But the fair guerdon when we hope to find
And think to burſt out into ſudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred ſhears
And ſlits the thin-ſpun life."———

LETTER XXVII.

ALLITERATION very early made its appearance in Engliſh poetry. I have ſeen an old piece where it was intended to ſupply the place of rhyme: the terminations of each line were different; and there were in every one, three or four words which begun with the ſame letter. This I ſuppoſe was thought a beauty. Shakſpeare in ſeveral places burleſques the improper uſe of Alliteration with great pleaſantry. It was much in requeſt

requeſt in the days of Thompſon ——his

——Floor, faithleſs to the fuddled foot,

is ſcarce leſs ridiculous than Shakſpeare's

Bravely broach'd his bloody boiling breaſt.

I believe wherever it is *perceived*, it diſguſts. There is ſomething very ridiculous in the pains of an author when he is ſearching for a ſet of words beginning with the ſame letter: this ſurely argues a "lack of matter." A man who has *things* in his head, is never curious about *words*, unleſs it be thoſe which expreſs his meaning quickeſt and cleareſt. I would have given ſomething to have ſeen the

the paper upon which *Smollet* firſt ſketched the titles of ſome of his novels. I dare ſay it coſt him as much time to fix upon the name *Roderick Random*, as to write ſome of the beſt parts in that ſprightly and entertaining performance.—— *Robert* and *Richard* were common, *Roger* and *Ralph* were vulgar—there was a neceſſity for a ſounding uncommon name, and beginning with an *R:* at laſt, by a lucky chance *Roderick* occurred—and *Roderick* it is.—Do you think me fanciful? I call upon *Peregrine Pickle*, and *Ferdinand Fathom* to prove the contrary.

If we laugh at the hard-ſought-for Alliteration of the poet and hiſtorian, may we not laugh a little louder

louder at that of the comic dramatiſt? Can any language be leſs that of nature or common converſation, than ſtrings of words beginning with an M or N? And yet this has been done by one who paints the "Manners living as they riſe." It is ſurprizing that ſo ſprightly a genius as Foote could ſubmit to the drudgery of conſulting his ſpelling-book for words proper to be paired — my three *ppp's* put me in mind of a letter in the Student, in which *p* is predominant — it is highly humourous and well worth your peruſing.

Will you give me leave to make an abrupt tranſition from Alliteration to *Literation*, and pardon me alſo for coining?

The Germans in pronouncing Engliſh, and writing it too, if they have not ſtudied the language, almoſt conſtantly change *b* into *p*, *d* into *t*, *g* (hard) into *k*, *v* into *f*, and the reverſe. This peculiarity of theirs, I find, upon recollection, is not confined to Engliſh. In the Burletta of *La buona Figliola*, the author makes his German character to ſay *trompetti* and *tampurri*—nay they ſerve their own language the ſame, as I have obſerved from their pronunciation of proper names of cities, &c. it ſeems difficult to account for this—— but perhaps not more ſo than for the trick of the French in giving an aſpirate to thoſe Engliſh words where there is none,

none, and omitting it where it ſhould be uſed.——I once ſaw a French-man much ſurprized, (not diſconcerted) at a general laugh when he was comparing our country women with his—an unlucky miſplaced aſpirate was all the cauſe —"The Engliſh ladies," ſays he, "are ſo plain, but the French ladies are ſo *'airy!*"

LETTER XXVIII.

THOUGH ſuperſtition is pretty well laughed away, yet there are ſome points in which we can never get the better of it. The wedding ring in coffee grounds—the coffin in the candle—the ſtranger in the fire, are marked by none but vulgar and fooliſh eyes. You ſee ſalt ſpilt, hear death-watches—owls hoot—dogs howl, and deſpiſe the omen—you are above it. But yet let me aſk *you*, an enlightened philoſopher—Whether you are above choice of ſeats at whiſt? Whether you have

have not really believed that your chance for winning was much bettered by your taking the fortunate chairs, and of courſe obliging your adverſaries to ſit, not in thoſe of the ſcornful, but of the loſers? When you quit the game on a run of ill luck, what is it but declaring your belief that the games already played have an influence upon thoſe which are to come?

Each ticket in a lottery has an equal chance——do you think ſo? Number 1000 got the great prize in the laſt lottery—now, confeſs honeſtly that you feel ſomething within that tells you the ſame number can never win the great prize again—you would prefer every other number to it—and yet rea-

ſon ſays, that all the tickets have an equal probability of ſucceſs. In theſe inſtances and many others, ſuperſtition, even in cultivated minds, will be always more than a match for truth.

A gentleman coming a paſſenger in a veſſel from the Weſt-Indies, finding it more inconvenient to be ſhaved than to wear his beard, choſe the latter——but he was not ſuffered to have his choice long—it was the unanimous opinion of the ſailors, and indeed of the Captain as well, that there was not the leaſt probability of a wind as long as this ominous beard was ſuffered to grow. They petitioned—they remonſtrated, and at laſt prepared to cut the fatal hairs by violence.

Now,

Now, as there is no operation at which it is ſo much the patient's intereſt to conſent, as that of the barber——the gentleman quietly ſubmitted—nor could the wind reſiſt the potent ſpell which inſtantly filled all their ſails, and "wafted them merrily away."

You ſee we have only got rid of *general* ſuperſtition, we ſtill retain that which belongs to our particular profeſſion or purſuits.

Adieu.

LETTER XXIX.

I Have often tryed to have a proper idea of vaſt ſpace—great numbers—enormous ſize and ſuch ſubjects, and as you may ſuppoſe, without ſucceſs. But though I fail in getting a competent idea, I ſometimes make an approach towards it, which is better than nothing.

The ſolar ſyſtem is one of theſe ſublime ſubjects in the conſideration of which I have frequently been loſt. I never attempted to conceive the ſize of the ſun, or the diſtance

diſtance of ſaturn; the impoſſibility inſtantly repels the moſt daring imagination. No, all that I have attempted is to have a juſt idea of the proportion (upon any ſcale) that the ſun and planets bear to each other in reſpect to ſize and diſtance. At firſt ſight, this ſeems eaſily done —Draw ſome concentric circles on a ſheet of paper, make the ſun the centre, and place the planets round in their order.—Or if you would have an idea of their motion as well, look at an orrery. But a little examination will convince you that this is doing nothing towards having an idea of their ſize and diſtance in proportion to each other, which is the point ſought. Nay, it is worſe than nothing, for

it

it impoſes a falſity as a reality. Imagination by itſelf can do a great deal, if aſſiſted it can do more, but if perverted, nothing. Let us try to aſſiſt the imagination then.

If the ſun be only a million times bigger than the earth, (exactneſs is of no conſequence to my argument, ſo that I am within the truth) it is plain that I cannot make two circles upon a ſheet of paper (without conſidering any thing about diſtance) that can bear this proportion to each other; and if this cannot be done for the earth, much leſs can it for other planets and moons where the diſproportion is greater. Let us take the floor of a large room—on this make a circle of two feet diameter for the ſun—the ſize of the

the earth will be about a large pin's head. The diſtance of the ſun from the earth is about eighty of the ſun's diameters; if ſo, there muſt be a circle of three hundred and twenty feet diameter for the earth's orbit, which no room, nor indeed any other building, will contain. Let us try a field——here we may put our ſun and draw the earth's orbit round. If we ſtand in the center (which we ſhould do) the earth is too ſmall to be ſeen. Theſe difficulties occurring ſo ſoon, how will they increaſe when we take in the ſuperior planets? The ingenious Ferguſon has endeavoured to aſſiſt our imagination by ſuppoſing St. Paul's dome, in diameter one hundred and forty-five feet, to be the

ſun

ſun——upon this ſcale, Mercury is between nine and ten inches, and placed at the Tower; Venus near eighteen, at St. James's Palace; the Earth eighteen, at Marybone; Mars ten, at Kenſington; Jupiter fifteen feet, at Hampton-Court; and Saturn eleven feet and half, at Cliffden. Let us be on the top of the dome, and look for the planets where he has placed them. Do you think we could ſee any thing of Jupiter and Saturn? to ſay nothing of their moons—or that we could conceive properly the difference between four miles and twenty, when ſeen on a line? the four may be two, or one mile; and the twenty may be ten, or thirty, for ought we can judge by the appearance.

pearance. All that we get by this is the knowing that a ſheet of paper or an orrery give us wrong ideas, and that we cannot by any contrivance put the ſize and diſtance of the planets upon a proportionable ſcale, ſo as to take in the whole with our eye or underſtanding.

We are as much at a loſs to comprehend the ſlowneſs of their motion—I have not miſtaken—I mean ſlowneſs.—A circuit which is ſix or twelve months or twice as many years performing, is ſlow almoſt beyond conception; and yet this motion is called whirling—as if the planets went round their orbits like a top! Though quick and ſlow are comparative terms, we have ideas of each ariſing from the medium

medium of the two, from obſervation, and common application, that do not ſtand in need of any compariſon to be underſtood. The motion of a flea is quick; of a ſnail, ſlow; and the common walk of a man is neither quick nor ſlow. Let us imagine an elephant to walk, and a flea to hop the ſame diſtance in the ſame time—would you heſitate to ſay that the motion of the one was ſlow, and the other quick? In ſhort, ſwiftneſs or ſlowneſs does not depend upon the abſolute quantity of ground the animal paſſes in a certain time, but upon the relative quantity to its own ſize. The earth is about eight minutes in moving the ſpace of one diameter, therefore its

its abſolute motion is ſlow—it is twenty-four hours making one revolution round its axis, which gives no idea of velocity. It is certain that if we were placed very near the earth (unaffected by its attraction) there would appear an exceeding quick change of ſurface—and ſo would the motion of a ſnail appear to an animalcule. The quantity of ſpace when compared to any we can move in the ſame time is vaſt, and the motion quick, but when conſidered as belonging to a body of the ſize of a world, the motion is ſlow. Suppoſe a common globe was turned round once in twenty-four hours—imagine an animal as much inferiour to it in ſize as we are to the earth, placed

as

as I conceived the human ſpectator placed to view the earth—would the apprehenſion of this Being induce you to call a ſingle revolution in twenty-four hours, whirling? Would not you ſay that though the ſurface paſſed quick in review before him, yet that the abſolute motion of the whole was exceedingly ſlow. Perhaps it is our meaſuring this motion by miles that makes us fancy that it is quick, which is much like taking the heighth of a mountain in hairs-breadths. When we are told that Saturn moves in his orbit more than twenty-two thouſand miles in an hour, we conceive the velocity to be great; but when we find that he is more than three hours moving his own diameter

meter, we muſt then think it as it really is, ſlow. Biſhop Wilkins is the only writer I have met with who conſiders the motion of the heavenly bodies as I do, and I am rather proud of having my opinion ſupported by ſo great a man.

There is another circumſtance which prevents the ſolar ſyſtem, as commonly delineated, from bearing a true reſemblance to the apparent poſition and motion of the planets. It is always drawn in plan inſtead of ſection, whereas the *appearance* of the orbits of the heavenly bodies is always in ſection and never can be in plan. This difference is not, as far as I know, noticed in any account of the ſolar ſyſtem; and yet if it be not attended to, it is

impoſſible to prove the truth of the ſyſtem by the apparent paths of the planets. This will be beſt underſtood by conſidering the inferior ones. Mercury and Venus remove to a certain diſtance from the ſun, and then, after ſeeming at reſt, return in nearly the ſame line and remove to the ſame diſtance on the other ſide, where the ſame thing is repeated. This to the eye is not a revolution in plan, but a revolution in ſection—and this might be explained by a draught which ſhould always accompany the common delineation of the planetary orbits.

LETTER

LETTER XXX.

IT is ſo long ſince that I ſent you the firſt part of my obſervations on Quarles that perhaps you have forgot my promiſe for the remainder.——I will now reſume the ſubject.

Quarles ſometimes introduces perſonages, and makes his poem of the dramatic caſt. The ſixth hieroglyphic is a dialogue between *Time* and *Death*; as uſual, alluding to the print, where *Death* is going to extinguiſh the taper, but is prevented by *Time*. There are a

few awkward expreſſions in this, which are eaſier to be overlooked than omitted.

Time. *Death.*

Time. Behold the frailty of this ſlender ſnuff;
Alas! it hath not long to laſt;
Without the help of either thief or puff,
Her weakneſs knows the way to waſte:
Nature hath made her ſubſtance apt enough
To ſpend itſelf, and ſpend too faſt:
It needs the help of none
That is ſo prone
To laviſh out untouch'd, and languiſh all alone.

Death. *Time*, hold thy peace, and ſhake thy ſlow-pac'd ſand;
Thine idle minutes make no way:
Thy glaſs exceeds her hour, or elſe doth ſtand,
I cannot hold, I cannot ſtay.
Surceaſe thy pleading, and enlarge my hand,
I ſurfeit with too long delay:
This briſk this bold-fac'd light
Doth burn too bright;
Darkneſs adorns my throne, my day is darkeſt night.

Time.

Time. Great Prince of darkneſs! hold thy needleſs hand,
Thy captive's faſt and cannot flee:
What arm can reſcue? who can countermand?
What pow'r can ſet thy pris'ner free?
Or if they could; what cloſe, what foreign land
Can hide that head that flees from thee?
But if her harmleſs light
Offend thy ſight
What need'ſt thou ſnatch at noon, what muſt be thine at night?

Death. I have outſtaid my patience; my quick trade
Grows dull and makes too ſlow return:
This long-liv'd debt is due, and ſhould been paid
When firſt her flame began to burn:
But I have ſtaid too long, I have delay'd
To ſtore my vaſt, my craving urn.
My patent gives me pow'r
Each day, each hour,
To ſtrike the peaſant's thatch, and ſhake the princely tow'r.

Time. Thou count'ſt too faſt: thy patent gives no pow'r
Till Time ſhall pleaſe to ſay, Amen.
Death. Canſt thou appoint my ſhaft? *Time.* Or thou my hour?
Death. 'Tis I bid, do. *Time.* 'Tis I bid, when;

Alas! thou canſt not make the pooreſt flow'r
To hang the drooping head 'till then:
Thy ſhafts can neither kill,
Nor ſtrike, until
My power gives them wings, and pleaſure arms
thy will!

There is nothing which deſtroys the *reality* in a dramatic dialogue more than when the ſpeakers aſk queſtions and reply in an equal quantity of lines. Perhaps the moſt diſguſting inſtance of this is in Milton's Maſk, where Comus and the Lady have a verſe each alternately, for fourteen lines together. We are more ſenſible of the ſameneſs in quantity where it is ſo ſhort, and ſo often repeated, than here in Quarles where it is extended to a ſtanza, and that repeated for each ſpeaker but once—

but

but even here you begin to feel its bad effect, when it is finely relieved towards the end by the characters growing warmer in their diſpute, and, of courſe, making their ſpeeches ſhorter. Yet what I here condemn, others admire.——You, who are ſo fond of the ancients, may eaſily defend this practice by their example, and if you want any aſſiſtance to demoliſh me, may call in Mr. Weſt and the author of the Origin and Progreſs of Language.—This paſſage of the former from his tranſlation of the Iphigenia of Euripedes is quoted by the latter with great commendations—— not indeed becauſe the dialogue is in alternate verſe, but for its being a fine imitation of the ancient trochaic meaſure.

Ipb. Know'ſt thou what ſhould now be ordered?
Tho. 'Tis thy office to preſcribe.
Ipb. Let them bind in chains the ſtrangers.
Tho. Canſt thou fear they ſhould eſcape?
Ipb. Truſt no Greek; Greece is perfidious.
Tho. Slaves depart, and bind the Greeks.
Ipb. Having bound, conduct them hither, &c.

It is true that here the reply wants one of having the ſame number of ſyllables as the queſtion—but ſtill the conſtant return of the ſame quantity for each ſpeaker is diſguſting to all unprejudiced ears. You will tell me that it is in the high guſto of the antique, and that the feet are trochaics—I can only reply, that hard words cannot convince me contrary to reaſon, and if a proper effect is not produced, it is of very little conſequence to me whether the authority is brought from Greece or Siberia. Horace's often-

often-quoted *Pallida mors*, &c. was perhaps never better tranſlated than at the end of the fourth ſtanza.

The ninth hieroglyphic will put you in mind of the poems that are ſqueezed or ſtretched into the form of axes, altars, and wings—— but if you will attend to the matter, and not the form, you will find it excellent—— to write this properly requires ſome care.

Behold
How ſhort a ſpan
Was long enough of old
To meaſure out the life of man;
In thoſe well-temper'd days, his time was then
Survey'd, caſt up, and found but threeſcore years and ten!

Alas!
And what is that?
They come, and ſlide, and paſs,
Before my pen can tell thee what.
The poſts of Time are ſwift, which having run
Their ſev'n ſhort ſtages o'er, their ſhort-liv'd taſk is done.

Our

Our days
Begun, we lend
To ſleep, to antick plays
And toys, until the firſt ſtage end:
12 waining moons, twice 5 times told, we give
To unrecover'd loſs: we rather breathe than live.

We ſpend
A ten years breath
Before we apprehend
What 'tis to live, or fear a Death:
Our childiſh dreams are fill'd with painted joys
Which pleaſe our ſenſe a while, and waking prove but toys!

How vain
How wretched is
Poor man, that doth remain
A ſlave to ſuch a ſtate as this!
His days are ſhort, at longeſt; few at moſt;
They are but bad at beſt; yet laviſh'd out, or loſt.

They be
The ſecret ſprings
That make our minutes flee
On wheels more ſwift than eagle's wings!
Our Life's a clock, and ev'ry gaſp of breath
Breathes forth a warning grief, till Time ſhall ſtrike a Death!

How

How ſoon
Our new-born light
Attains to full-ag'd noon!
And this, how ſoon to grey-hair'd night!
We ſpring, we bud, we bloſſom and we blaſt
E'er we can count our days, our days they flee ſo faſt!

They end
When ſcarce begun;
And e'er we apprehend
That we begin to live, our life is done:
Man count thy days; and if they fly too faſt
For thy dull thoughts to count, count ev'ry day the laſt.

Methinks Quarles's ghoſt is at my elbow, which will not be appeaſed unleſs I remark that the firſt lines of each ſtanza make a verſe, being the text on which the poem is a comment.

Behold, alas! our days we ſpend;
How vain they be, how ſoon they end!

This is a kind of falſe wit once much in requeſt. Jarvis, the tranſlator

lator of Don Quixote, calls it *gloſſing* —upon what authority I know not. In the firſt chapter of the ſecond book of the ſecond volume may be found a text and gloſs—with this difference from Quarles's, that the text is introduced at the end of the ſtanza and not at the beginning.

It is impoſſible to avoid ſmiling at the pains he muſt have taken to preſerve the form of the ſtanza—in the third he is obliged to have the aſſiſtance of figures, or his line would have been too long; and after all his trouble there muſt be ſome for the reader before he has calculated how much "12 moons, twice 5 times told," are——in the reſt, to ſay the truth, it is not ſo apparent. If this pyramidical

ſtanza

ſtanza prevents you from attending to the poetry, it is eaſily put in another—of the two firſt lines make one; and the falſe wit immediately vaniſhes.—I hope Quarles's ghoſt vaniſhed before I propoſed the alteration.

I have, like a prudent caterer, reſerved the beſt thing for the laſt. It is the twelfth emblem of the third book. The ſubject of the print is a figure trying to eſcape from the Divine vengeance which is purſuing in thunders: the motto——*O that thou wouldſt hide me in the grave, that thou wouldſt keep me in ſecret until thy wrath be paſt!* Upon this hint he has produced the following excellent poem.

Ah! whither ſhall I fly? what path untrod
Shall I ſeek out to 'ſcape the flaming rod
Of my offended, of my angry God?

Where ſhall I ſojourn? what kind ſea will hide
My head from thunder? where ſhall I abide,
Until his flames be quench'd or laid aſide?

What, if my feet ſhould take their haſty flight,
And ſeek protection in the ſhades of night?
Alas! no ſhades can blind the God of light.

What, if my ſoul ſhould take the wings of day,
And find ſome deſert? if ſhe ſpring away
The wings of vengeance clip as faſt as they.

What, if ſome ſolid rock ſhould entertain
My frighted ſoul? can ſolid rocks reſtrain
The ſtroke of Juſtice and not cleave in twain?

Nor ſea, nor ſhade, nor ſhield, nor rock, nor cave,
Nor ſilent deſerts, nor the ſullen grave,
Where flame-ey'd fury means to ſmite, can ſave.

Tis vain to flee; 'till gentle mercy ſhew
Her better eye; the farther off we go,
The ſwing of Juſtice deals the mightier blow.

Th' ingenuous child, corrected, doth not flie
His angry mother's hand, but clings more nigh,
And quenches with his tears her flaming eye.

Great God! there is no ſafety here below;
Thou art my fortreſs, thou that ſeem'ſt my foe,
'Tis thou that ſtrik'ſt the ſtroke, muſt guard the blow.

Six ſtanzas, which though very good, yet being of leſs merit than the reſt are omitted. It is obvious that he had the 139th pſalm in his eye, of which he has made great uſe. The alarm at the beginning—the ſearching all nature for ſhelter—the impoſſibility of being hid from the author of nature—and the acquieſcing at laſt in what was unavoidable, are grand and natural ideas. The motion of the wings of vengeance—and the recapitulation of the places where protection was ſought in vain—are inſtances of

of expreſſion rarely met with. But what praiſe is ſufficient for the ſimile in the eighth ſtanza? To ſay only that it is appoſite and beautiful, comes very ſhort of my ſenſations when I read it. Let me confeſs honeſtly that I think it one of the nobleſt inſtances of the ſublime pathetic! As a part of a religious poem it is proper, in a high degree; the ſcripture frequently conſidering our connection with the Almighty as that of children with a parent.—As a pictoreſque image it is diſtinct, natural, and affecting. —But to remark all the beauties of this poem would be to comment on every ſtanza.——You will have more pleaſure in finding them out yourſelf.

Now

Now what think you, is not this rather too good to be loſt? Was it from never reading Quarles, or taking his character from common report, that Pope conſidered his productions as the very bathos of poetry? Poor Quarles! thou haſt had many enemies, and art now forgotten. But thou haſt at laſt found a friend—not equal, indeed, to the taſk of turning a tide that has been flowing for a hundred years againſt thee—not equal to his wiſhes for giving thee and every neglected genius his due ſhare of reputation—but barely capable of laying the firſt ſtone of thy temple of fame, which he leaves to be compleated by abler and by ſtronger hands!

Farewel.

P. S. I had forgot to inform you that theſe emblems were imitated in Latin by one Herman Hugo, a Jeſuit. The firſt edition of them was in 1623, ſoon after the appearance of Quarles; and the book was reprinted for the ninth time in 1676, which laſt is the date of the copy in my poſſeſſion. How many more editions there have been, I know not. He makes no acknowledgement to Quarles, and ſpeaks of his own work as original. As a ſpecimen of his manner, take the following, which is intended as an imitation of "Ah whither ſhall I fly?"

Quis mihi ſecuris dabit hoſpita tecta latebris?
Tecta, quibus dextræ ſerver ab igne tuæ?
Heu! tuus ante oculos quoties furor ille recurſat,
Nulla mihi toties fida ſat antra reor.

Tunc

Tunc ego ſecretas, umbracula frondea, ſylvas,
Luſtràque ſolivagis opto relicta feris.
Tunc ego vel mediis timidum caput abdere terris,
Aut maris exeſâ condere rupe velim, &c.

It reads but poorly after the other, though I have given you the beſt of it. He afterwards by degrees quits his ſubject, runs into ſtuff about Cain and Jonah, and has entirely omitted the ſimile.

You expreſs an inclination to publiſh my letters. You ſhould conſider that the date of ſome of them is ſo far back, that many alluſions to paſſing incidents which might engage attention at the time, now muſt fail of their effect.—— People are ſpoken of as living, who are dead——and many other objections might be enumerated. However;

However, you are at liberty to do what you pleaſe with them. Thoſe which are of a private nature, your prudence will, of courſe, keep to yourſelf: and for the others, where ſome conjectures are hazarded which may be thought different from received opinions; the writer wiſhes them to be read with the ſame impartiality they were written—— though he is well apprized of the difficulty of diſpoſſeſſing old opinions.

BRITISH
22 SP 88
MUSEUM

F I N I S.